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Dog Day Afternoon, and Its 1,000 Canines, Returns to Cathedral Plaza

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photo by Gary Leonard

Dog Day Afternoon, and Its 1,000 Canines, Returns to Cathedral Plaza

About 1,000 dogs and 1,500 humans are expected at Dog Day Afternoon at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. The free happening takes place Wednesday, July 9, from 6-9.

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By Heidi Kulicke

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he line “So 1,000 dogs walk over to a cathedral...” sounds like the start of a joke. In Downtown Los Angeles, this week, it’s completely serious.

The ninth installment of Dog Day Afternoon takes place on Wednesday, July 8, from 6-9 p.m. at the plaza of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. The free event is organized by the Downtown Center Business Improvement District in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and attracts about 1,500 people and 1,000 of their furry friends, said Carol Schatz, president and CEO of the DCBID.

The event will feature mingling, music, pet vendors and animal adoptions, Schatz said. Humans will have food and beverage options available for purchase.

The purpose of the event is to create a sense of community among dog owners, said Hal Bastian, a former DCBID executive who now runs his own Downtown consulting firm.

Bastian co-founded Dog Day Afternoon in 2007 with the cathedral’s Monsignor Kevin Kostelnik. The goal, Bastian recalls, was to bring people and their dogs together in a public setting.

“We started talking about our dogs, my golden retriever named Buddy and his black lab Joaquin, and decided to do an event focused on dogs,” Bastian said.

Dog Day Afternoon is devoid of the heavy speechifying that occurs at so many happenings. Instead, it’s mostly an evening where humans converse while dogs of all breeds, colors and sizes sniff and play with each other (there are staffers with brooms, dustbins and spray bottles for when dogs do something else).

Both Buddy and Joaquin have passed away, and Bastian has another dog, Scooter, a Shiba Inu mix. Bastian said he plans to bring him to Wednesday’s event, where they will reconnect with both human and canine friends.

Meeting People Is Easy

The underlying philosophy of Dog Day Afternoon was that canines are conversation starters, whether it involves a human taking Fido on a walk and meeting another person holding a leash, or a pair of pet parents starting to talk at a dog park.

Downtown quickly developed a reputation as a pet-friendly enclave, and as the human population exploded, so did the number of Downtown dogs. According to the DCBID’s 2013 Downtown Demographic Study, 30% of Central City residents have a dog (another 14% have a cat). The proliferation has led to the debut of several dog parks and the opening of numerous pet service businesses.

“When you have a social dog it opens up communication between the humans who normally wouldn’t have a reason to talk to each other,” Bastian said. “We often know the dogs’ names but not the humans’ names.”

It’s not always easy to meet people in an urban setting, acknowledged Kostelnik. However, when individuals do start talking, common interests can be discovered, and with it, friendships are born.

“Last year I had two women who thanked me for hosting the event, as they both had lofts in the same building just two floors apart but had never met,” Kostelnik said. “Now they walk their dogs together every morning.”

Kostelnik even thinks people can learn from a dog’s natural accepting and communal nature. That could pay off when a person has to decide where to live, he believes.

“When their lease is up, and when thinking about Downtown, at least they will know the City of Angels cared about them and their pets,” Kostelnik said. “For some people, that’s reason enough to continue living in Downtown.”

Dog Day Afternoon is open to all Downtown residents, including those who don’t own dogs but just really like them (RSVPs are requested). Parking is available at the cathedral for \$8. Dogs must be social and kept on a leash at all times during the event.

Vendors at Dog Day Afternoon will include Pet Project L.A., Pussy and Pooch and Downtown veterinarians. Adoptions will be offered by Best Friends Society and Westside German Shepherd Rescue, among others.

Dog Day Afternoon is 6-9 p.m. on Wednesday, July 9, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, 555 W. Temple St., (213) 624-2146 or

downtownla.com/dogday to RSVP.

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